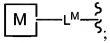
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following **Listing of Claims** will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

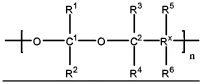
1. **(Currently Amended)** A conjugate comprising a carrier substituted with one or more occurrences of a moiety having the structure:



wherein each occurrence of M is independently a pharmaceutically useful modifier;

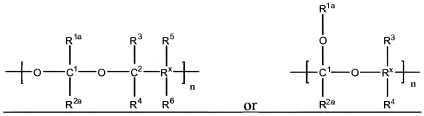
the carrier comprises a biodegradable biocompatible polymer selected from polyacetals or polyketals[[;]] and the molecular weight of the carrier is between about 0.5 and about 1500 kDa;

wherein at least a subset of the polyacetal repeat structural units have the following chemical structure:



wherein for each occurrence of the n bracketed structure, one of R^1 and R^2 is hydrogen, and the other is a biocompatible group and includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^1; R^x includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^2; n is an integer; each occurrence of R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 is a biocompatible group and is independently hydrogen or an organic moiety; and for each occurrence of the bracketed structure n, at least one of R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 comprises a carbonyl group suitable for oxime formation;

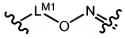
wherein at least a subset of the polyketal repeat structural units have the following chemical structure:



wherein each occurrence of R^{1a} and R^{2a} is a biocompatible group and includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^1, and at least one of R^{1a}, R^{2a}, R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 comprises a carbonyl group suitable for oxime formation and

each occurrence of L^M is independently an oxime-containing linker.

2. **(Original)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein each occurrence of L^M is independently a moiety having the structure:



wherein each occurrence of L^{M1} is independently a substituted or unsubstituted, cyclic or acyclic, linear or branched $C_{0\text{-}12}$alkylidene or $C_{0\text{-}12}$alkenylidene moiety wherein up to two non-adjacent methylene units are independently optionally replaced by CO, CO_2, COCO, $CONR^{Z1}$, $OCONR^{Z1}$, $NR^{Z1}NR^{Z2}$, $NR^{Z1}NR^{Z2}CO$, $NR^{Z1}CO$, $NR^{Z1}CO_2$, $NR^{Z1}CONR^{Z2}$, SO, SO_2, $NR^{Z1}SO_2$, SO_2NR^{Z1}, $NR^{Z1}SO_2NR^{Z2}$, O, S, or NR^{Z1}; wherein each occurrence of R^{Z1} and R^{Z2} is independently hydrogen, alkyl, heteroalkyl, aryl, heteroaryl or acyl.

3. **(Original)** The conjugate of claim 2, wherein one or more occurrences of L^{M1} independently comprises a maleimide- or N-hydroxysuccinimide ester-containing crosslinker.

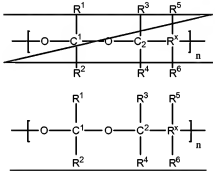
4. **(Original)** The conjugate of claim 3, wherein one or more occurrences of L^{M1} independently comprises a 4-(N-maleimidomethyl)cyclohexane-1-carboxylate, m-maleimidobenzoyl or a 4-(p-maleimidophenyl)butyrate crosslinker.

5. **(Original)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein one or more occurrences of M comprises, or is attached to the carrier through, a biodegradable bond.

6. **(Original)** The conjugate of claim 4, wherein the biodegradable bond is selected from the group consisting of acetal, ketal, amide, ester, thioester, enamine, imine, imide, dithio, and phosphoester bond.

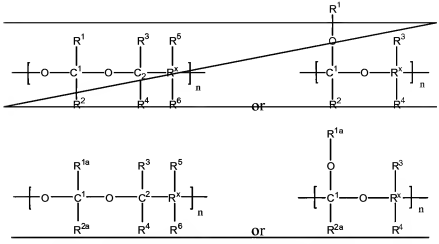
7-10. **(Cancelled)**.

11. **(Currently Amended)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier is a biodegradable biocompatible polyacetal wherein at least a subset of the polyacetal repeat structural units have the following chemical structure:



wherein for each occurrence of the n bracketed structure, one of R^1 and R^2 is hydrogen, and the other is a biocompatible group and includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^1; R^x includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^2; n is an integer; each occurrence of R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 is a biocompatible group and is independently hydrogen or an organic moiety; and for each occurrence of the bracketed structure n, at least one of R^1, R^2, R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 comprises a carbonyl group suitable for oxime formation.

12. **(Currently Amended)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier is a biodegradable biocompatible polyketal wherein at least a subset of the polyketal repeat structural units have the following chemical structure:



wherein each occurrence of ~~R^1~~ $\underline{R^{1a}}$ and ~~R^2~~ $\underline{R^{2a}}$ is a biocompatible group and includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^1; R^x includes a carbon atom covalently attached to C^2; n is an integer; each occurrence of R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 is a biocompatible group and is independently hydrogen or an organic moiety; and for each occurrence of the bracketed structure n, at least one of ~~R^1, R^2~~; $\underline{R^{1a}, R^{2a}}$, R^3, R^4, R^5 and R^6 comprises a carbonyl group suitable for oxime formation.

13. **(Cancelled)**.

14. **(Previously Presented)** The conjugate of claim 12, wherein one or more occurrence of M is selected from the group consisting of proteins, antibodies, antibody fragments, peptides, antineoplastic drugs, hormones, cytokines, enzymes, enzyme substrates, receptor ligands, lipids, nucleotides, nucleosides, metal complexes, cations, anions, amines, heterocycles, heterocyclic amines, aromatic groups, aliphatic groups, intercalators, antibiotics, antigens, immunomodulators, and antiviral compounds.

15-18. **(Cancelled)**.

19. **(Original)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the conjugate is water-soluble.

20. **(Previously Presented)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the conjugate comprises a pharmaceutically useful modifier and a detectable label.

21-41. **(Cancelled)**.

41. **(Original)** A composition comprising the conjugate of claim 1 and a pharmaceutically suitable carrier or diluent.

42. **(Previously presented)** A composition comprising a conjugate of claim 1 associated with an effective amount of a therapeutic agent; wherein the therapeutic agent is incorporated into and released from said conjugate matrix by degradation of the conjugate matrix or diffusion of the agent out of the matrix over a period of time.

43. **(Previously Presented)** The composition of claim 42 wherein said conjugate is further associated with a diagnostic label.

44. **(Withdrawn)** A method of administering to a patient in need of treatment, comprising administering to the subject an effective amount of a suitable therapeutic agent; wherein said therapeutic agent is associated with and released from a conjugate of claim 1 by degradation of the conjugate matrix or diffusion of the agent out of the matrix over a period of time.

45. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 44 wherein said therapeutic agent is locally delivered by implantation of said conjugate matrix incorporating the therapeutic agent.

46. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 44 wherein said therapeutic agent is selected from the group consisting of: vitamins, anti-AIDS substances, anti-cancer substances, antibiotics, immunosuppressants, anti-viral substances, enzyme inhibitors, neurotoxins, opioids, hypnotics, anti-histamines, lubricants, tranquilizers, anti-convulsants, muscle relaxants and anti-Parkinson substances, anti-spasmodics and muscle contractants including channel blockers, miotics and

anti-cholinergics, anti-glaucoma compounds, anti-parasite and/or anti-protozoal compounds, modulators of cell-extracellular matrix interactions including cell growth inhibitors and anti-adhesion molecules, vasodilating agents, inhibitors of DNA, RNA or protein synthesis, anti-hypertensives, analgesics, anti-pyretics, steroidal and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents, anti-angiogenic factors, anti-secretory factors, anticoagulants and/or antithrombotic agents, local anesthetics, ophthalmics, prostaglandins, anti-depressants, anti-psychotic substances, anti-emetics, imaging agents.

47. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 44 further comprising administering with the therapeutic agent additional pharmaceutically useful compounds selected from the group consisting of vitamins, anti-AIDS substances, anti-cancer substances, antibiotics, immunosuppressants, anti-viral substances, enzyme inhibitors, neurotoxins, opioids, hypnotics, anti-histamines, lubricants, tranquilizers, anti-convulsants, muscle relaxants and anti-Parkinson substances, anti-spasmodics and muscle contractants including channel blockers, miotics and anti-cholinergics, anti-glaucoma compounds, anti-parasite and/or anti-protozoal compounds, modulators of cell-extracellular matrix interactions including cell growth inhibitors and anti-adhesion molecules, vasodilating agents, inhibitors of DNA, RNA or protein synthesis, anti-hypertensives, analgesics, anti-pyretics, steroidal and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents, anti-angiogenic factors, anti-secretory factors, anticoagulants and/or antithrombotic agents, local anesthetics, ophthalmics, prostaglandins, anti-depressants, anti-psychotic substances, anti-emetics, imaging agents, and combination thereof.

48. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 44 wherein said conjugate further comprises or is associated with a diagnostic label.

49. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 48 wherein said diagnostic label is selected from the group consisting of: radiopharmaceutical or radioactive isotopes for gamma scintigraphy and PET, contrast agent for Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), contrast agent for computed tomography, contrast agent for X-ray imaging method, agent for ultrasound diagnostic method,

agent for neutron activation, moiety which can reflect, scatter or affect X-rays, ultrasounds, radiowaves and microwaves and fluorophores.

50. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 48 wherein said conjugate is further monitored *in vivo*.

51. **(Withdrawn)** A method of administering a conjugate of claim 1 to an animal, comprising preparing an aqueous formulation of said conjugate and parenterally injecting said formulation in the animal.

52-53. **(Cancelled)**.

54. **(Withdrawn)** A method of administering a conjugate of claim 1 to an animal, comprising preparing an implant comprising said conjugate, and implanting said implant into the animal.

55. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 54, wherein said implant is a biodegradable gel matrix.

56. **(Withdrawn)** A method for treating of an animal in need thereof, comprising administering a conjugate as in claim 51 or 54, wherein said conjugate is associated with a pharmaceutically useful component.

57. **(Cancelled).**

58. **(Withdrawn)** The method of claim 51, wherein the pharmaceutically useful component is a gene vector.

59. **(Withdrawn)** A method for eliciting an immune response in an animal, comprising administering a conjugate as in claim 51 or 54, wherein said conjugate comprises an antigen modifier.

60-62. **(Cancelled)**.

63. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 4, wherein one or more occurrences of L^{M1} independently comprises a 4-(N-maleimidomethyl)cyclohexane-1-carboxylate crosslinker.

64. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 4, wherein one or more occurrences of L^{M1} independently comprises a m-maleimidobenzoyl crosslinker.

65. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 4, wherein one or more occurrences of L^{M1} independently comprises a 4-(p-maleimidophenyl)butyrate crosslinker.

66. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the molecular weight of the carrier is between about 1 and about 1000 kDa.

67. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 11, wherein the molecular weight of the carrier is between about 1 and about 1000 kDa.

68. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 12, wherein the molecular weight of the carrier is between about 1 and about 1000 kDa.

69. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 1, wherein the carrier is hydrophilic.

70. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 11, wherein the carrier is hydrophilic.

71. **(New)** The conjugate of claim 12, wherein the carrier is hydrophilic.